

REASONS

FOR AN

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UNION

BETWEEN THE

CHURCH

AND THE

DISSENTERS

WE have at this day many things to lament and complain of: and there is nothing that is a greater cause of General Sorrow than the *Revils* and *Distractions* that are amongst *Protestants*: It is confessed on all hands, that the only way to Repair these Breaches is, that both sides must yield; but who must lead the way, is the first question, and to that I think there is a very Natural Answer, which is this, That they who have the Care and Guidance of the Church, should by their Condescension in some things that are indifferent, give a good Example to induce Dissenters to come up to be more conformable; for they that are the Guides are to lead, and not to follow: As if there be a new Law made, whether they that are to see it duly executed, shall first put

it in practice, or else neglect it till it be done by the Rabble; and in this I conceive there is no difficulty, neither can there be any doubt in the other. And there is yet a further Reason of it; For what hopes have Protestant Dissenters to affect an Union, by coming up to some things, so long as they see the Bishops are so far from parting with one indifferent Ceremony, that they are daily re-asserting several things that the first Reformers had cast away: So that they are at no certainty; for what know they, but when they have conformed to all that is now enjoined, when shall other new things be imposed upon them? So that without Question, it is necessary that the Bishops do begin the Work; and we think they should strive to have the Honour of so Famous an Undertaking, as to be the first Authors of uniting Protestants; And, it is to their Reproach that they have delayed it so long.

It is true there is an Objection made against Remitting any Ceremonies, which is this; That Dissenters are not yet Reformed what they would be contented with; and therefore if you comply with them so far as they desire, all things would be brought into confusion, and the Church would be laid desolate, and therefore the Ceremonies are to be kept to preserve Order and Unity in the Church.

I do acknowledge that Order and Unity are very necessary to be maintained; but surely that is not the right way to preserve Order and Unity in the Church, by making things necessary that are indifferent (if that be the worst that can be said of them) to keep Thousands out of the Church; and me thinks that Man Ventures very far, who will make that necessary for which he has no Command from our Saviour, or the Apostles. I do also acknowledge, that there is no great hopes to bring in all Dissenters; But tho' I cannot gain all, yet shall we not bring in as many as we can.

can. And he that has considered it without prejudice, can not but be of Opinion, that if three or four Things were taken away, or left *ad libitum*, that several Thousands would conform, and be very good Sons of the Church. And these things which they desire not to have imposed on them, are not *Fundamentals*; and if they were taken away would leave the Doctrine of the Church as sound as before, and the Discipline perhaps more pure, because it would come nearer to the *Primitive Institution*, which perhaps is that that makes the *Morsel* so bitter to their *Lordships* the Bishops. But besides this, those Ceremonies which Dissenters find fault with, are old *Papish Ceremonies*, and retained by the first Reformers to bring in the *Papists* that were inclinable to turn; and besides it had been as dangerous to have taken away all at a Clap, for *Q. E.* had seen the bad Effects of a sudden thorough Change both in the time of her Father, and her Sister *Q. M.* And therefore she would not pretend to build Rome at a day, nor to take it down the next, but she proceeded by degrees, as she found people would bear it. For its a dangerous thing to press any thing against the Stream of the Nation, and who ere he be that thinks to carry it, will find himself grossly mistaken. Therefore she was forced to keep in many of the *Papish Ceremonies*, the better to Unite the People; And if that was her design in retaining these Ceremonies, then without Question we have no further occasion for them, because the design is at an end for which they were retained. And no Man can be so senseless as to think that the first Reformers had done all that was to be done, but that they left something for them that succeeded to finish. They had marked out the Work, and have done a great deal towards perfecting of it, but yet they left a great deal to do for them that came after. And I wish it were also considered, that in regard the first Reform-

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I certain of these Ceremonies, for being Popish into the Church;  
why should not we have the same Clergy to lay them a-  
side, and bring in *Reformation*. Ought not we to  
have the same Bowels of Compassion that they had? As for  
my own particular, I can comply with every thing that the  
Church does Command; but it cannot but trouble any  
good Man to see his Brethren that out of the Church, be-  
cause he has not on such a Gown or Cloaths, or will not  
bow to this or that Post.

The Kneeling at the Sacrament, I wish there be not too  
much Idolatry in it, and bowing to the Altar is of the same  
piece: but I believe there are *Thousands* who have never con-  
sidered these things so far, or perhaps not at all; who are  
very averse and do not conform, because they *detest* of  
Popery. For the *Temper of England* is bent against Popery;  
the Name of it is odious to those that know not what  
it is. Therefore it is plain that it is not for the good of the  
Church that these Ceremonies are not layed aside, and the  
Bishops themselves do know that the Churches would be  
ruin'd if these Ceremonies were left indifferent. But the true  
Reason why they contend so strongly for Ceremonies, is  
not to preserve the Church, but to support themselves; for  
they very well apprehend, that their sloath and neglect of  
their Cures, would be layed open by the Care and Vigil-  
ancy of many *Pious and able Men*, who would conform, if  
Ceremonies were left indifferent: And then it would not be  
so easy for them to ingross such *Multitudes* of Livings, and  
Church-performments into one hand; They are afraid least  
Peoples eyes should be further *enlighten'd*, and a thorough  
Reformation should be wrought; it is Terrible to them to  
think of Reducing *Episcopacy* to its primitive institution:  
They are sensible that then it will be discovered that is the  
*Primitive*

*Primitive* times there was no such thing as an *Arch Bishop*, and that it came in, with *Superstition* and *Blindness*: Those and abundance of other things that I could reckon, stick on their *Stomachs*, but I will not Loose your time, by Re-counting of them.

In Regard therefore that the enjoying of *Ceremonies* keep *Thousands* from conforming: I desire to be Answered, whether they who stickle for *Ceremonies* do not play th *Pope's* Game to his greatest *Advantage*, for that which the *Pope* has always made his design, is to divide *Protestants*, and he knows there is no other way to ruine them but by somenting differences amongst them; for all his other devices have proved nothing in Comparison of it.

And yet these *Ceremony Mangers* do speak plain sometimes; for tho they pretend to be for uniting of *Protestants*, yet they will tell you that *Presbyterians* are worse than the *Devil*, and the *Papists* are to be esteemed of ten fold better than they, so that it will our slip them sometimes: do they not openly own their design, and when e're they mention the Plot: How plainly do they bowray themselves; with what difficulty are they brought to *Acknowledge* the belief of it? But no sooner was that Faction of the *Presbyterian Plot* statted, but presently they ran away with it as the greatest truth, every where arguing People into the belief of it: As if themselves had had a hand in it, or else were such well wishers to it, that they desired it might succeed: For it is not to be denied that no People can be less Active, if not altogether passive against the *Povish Plot*, than these *Ceremony Isolaters*, and the *Bishops* themselves: so that with Submission I take it to be plain that *Popery* is at the bottom; And whilst that prevails, there is little hopes of uniting *Protestants* by our dignified Clergy; and therefore the *Parliament* must do it, if e'te it be done. If

If Ceremonies are of that Moment that we must suppose the Church cannot subsist if they be laid aside. Therefore I will let that pass; and Humbly offer one thing, that the Conceive will conduce greatly to the composing the differences that are amongst us, and I am the more confident to propose it, because altho' it lay in this, yet I hope that thing will appear Reasonable. In short therefore it is this, That a Law be made to take away Pluristries and Non-residences: Nor to have any Retrospect, for that I would not do, but to bar them for the Future; For by these it is that much of our Divisions are increased and high laid; and I'll show you how it comes to pass.

They who are Bred up to be Ministers are for the most part the Sons of such Parents, who are not capable of doing further for them than to maintain them at the University till they are capable to be admitted into a Benefice; And when they have done that, they turn them off to provide for themselves, who possibly have not five pounds in all the World, or a Cross (as we say) to bless themselves with; So that being put to shift for themselves, they find it difficult to get into a Living, for when any Vacancy is, it is often supplied by a Man that is beneficed already than by him that has none. Therefore what must he do, he has nothing to subsist on, he can get no preferment, he must not starve; Work he cannot, to Beg he is ashamed, Steal he dares not; What then is his Refuge? There is no way left, but to insinuate himself into the Opinion of them that separate from the Church, and to gain Approbation, he must Preach up a new fangled Doctrine, and so gain to himself a People; And these he must be sure to keep from the Church by speaking against it and telling terrible Stories of it, to fill them with fear and apprehensions that they may



may not come at it ; so that he is sure that if he can give them a dislike of the Church, their Benevolences will be the more Liberal and certain ; Whereas if Room were made for Ecclesiastical preferments, by preventing pluralities and non-residences, young Clergy-Men would not be so apt to turn aside, because they need not despair of Preferment ; I acknowledge this would not wholly cure our Discomple, but I dare appeal to any Reasonable Man, whether it would not go a great way in the work.

But to let this pass, I will proceed and mention a few things, and then let any Man, if he can, justify Pluralists, and Non-Residence. First, where do we find in Scripture that any one Man had several flocks committed to his Care ; Nay that of a Bishop ( which is allowable in any, ought to have the oversight of many Congregations ) yet they are confined to one Church, by the Primitive Institution of them ; when the Clergy made the Work of the Ministry their Business. Therefore I would fain be satisfied, how it comes to pass that the Work of the Ministry is or ought to be less the Care of the Clergy than heretofore : For so it is now a days, and it plainly appears by their Coveting Pluralities. For how can he that has several Livings preach at them all ; Visit and Comfort the Sick, and do all the Duties of him whose Care it is to watch for their Souls. And how unreasonable a thing is it, for one Man to have five, six, perhaps more Preferments, and five or six Measures of Learning and Piety perish for want of Bread ? It would make a Man begin to think that Church Preferments were ordained for these Pluralists, and not designed for every worthy Labourer, who well deserves his Hire ; Besides, not to say any thing of the Debauchery, Pride, Covetousness, and Contention of the Clergy ; What a shame is

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 it to see how these *Pluralists* make choice of their *Curates* :  
 their Question is not, what is best : but how little will he  
 take : as if Piety and Learning made no Matter, and were  
 not requisite ; And if a good Man be preferred to be a *Cu-  
 rate*, it is by accident and not by design. And therefore I  
 humbly conceive that the Divisions of our Church are not  
 a little occasioned by this, and Contempt brought upon it.  
 And is it not sad to think, that Men shall be preferred to  
 the Church, upon the Account of Interest and not for Me-  
 rit, This being so plain, I will not multiply words upon  
 it, but conclude with this, that every Man's Religion is,  
*To do Justly, love Mercy, and to walk humbly with GOD, to  
 Believe in our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and not to put our Bre-  
 thren out of the Church, (for which GOD Almighty will shut  
 Heaven Gates against us.*

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